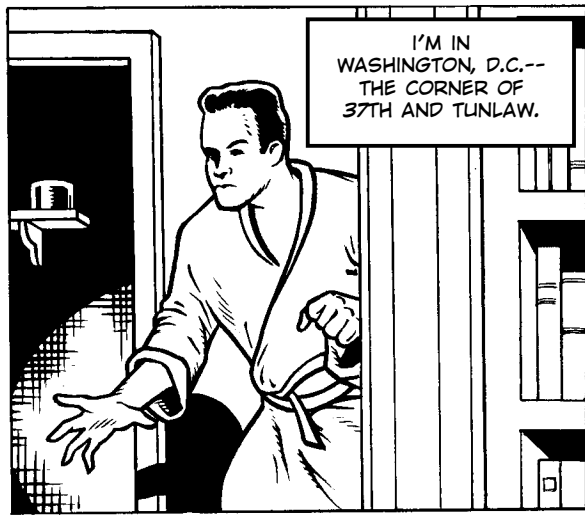


SEPTEMBER ELEVENTH,  
TWO-THOUSAND ONE.

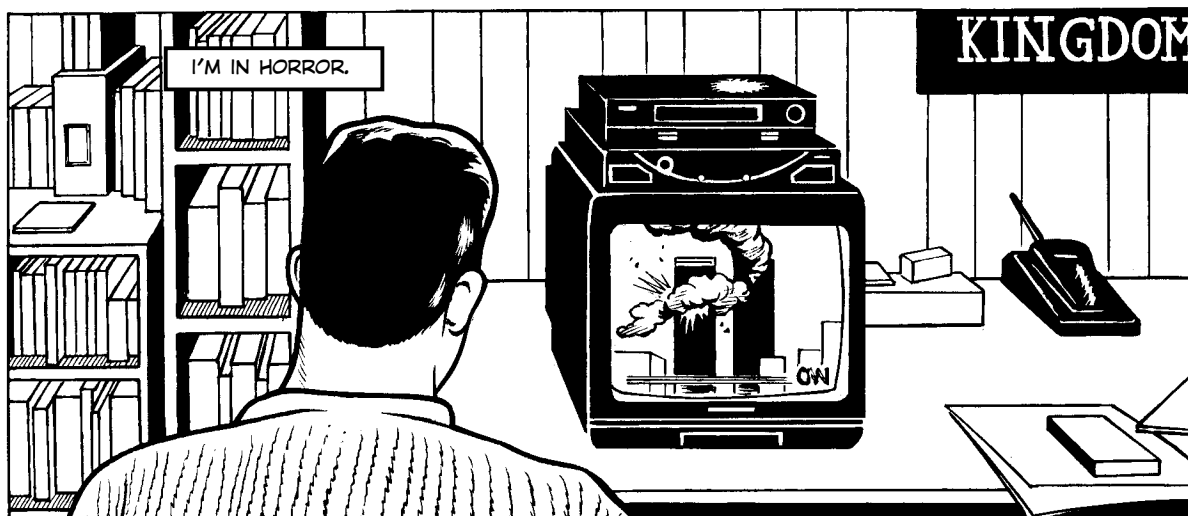


I'M IN  
WASHINGTON, D.C.--  
THE CORNER OF  
37TH AND TUNLAW.



I'M IN THE  
GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY  
ENGLISH MASTER'S PROGRAM.

I'M IN A 5-MILE RADIUS  
FROM THE PENTAGON--  
3 MILES FROM THE WHITE HOUSE.



I'M IN HORROR.

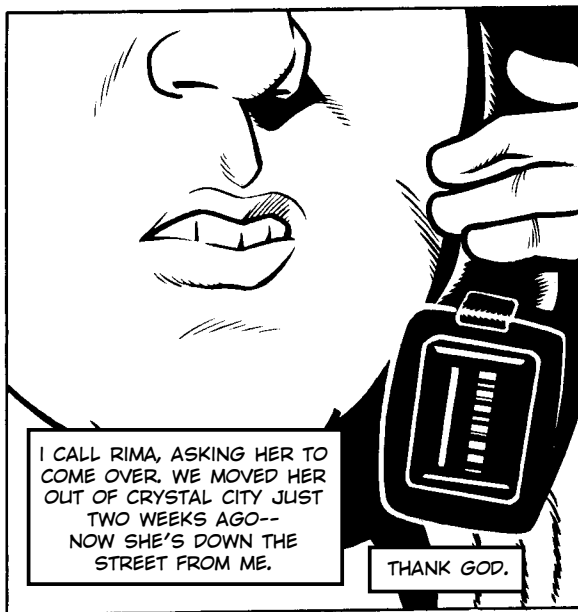
KINGDOM

## "ALABASTER CITIES"

STORY BY A. DAVID LEWIS - LETTERING BY DAN COONEY

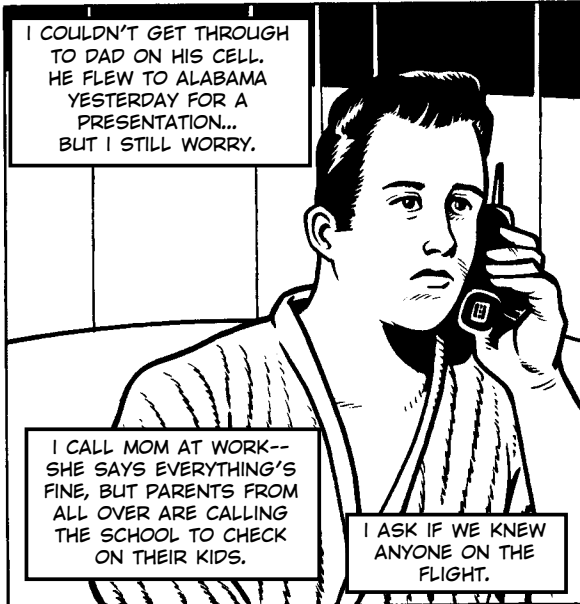
ART BY EVAN QUIRING & DARREN MERINUK, DAN COONEY & PETER PALMIOTTI,  
AND JASON NARVAEZ & JASON MARTIN





I CALL RIMA, ASKING HER TO COME OVER. WE MOVED HER OUT OF CRYSTAL CITY JUST TWO WEEKS AGO-- NOW SHE'S DOWN THE STREET FROM ME.

THANK GOD.



I COULDN'T GET THROUGH TO DAD ON HIS CELL. HE FLEW TO ALABAMA YESTERDAY FOR A PRESENTATION... BUT I STILL WORRY.

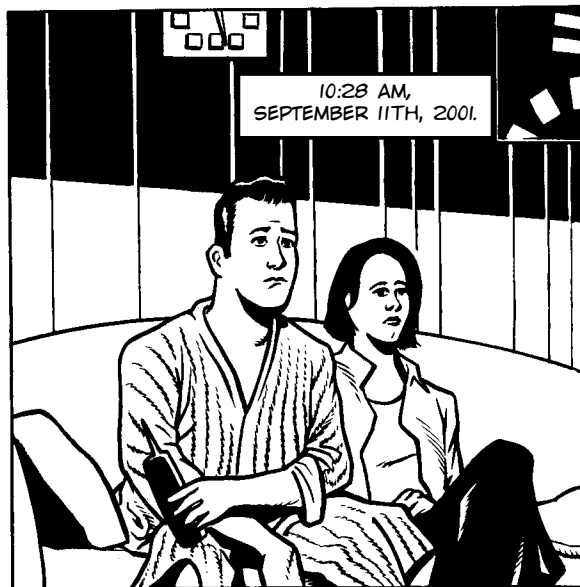
I CALL MOM AT WORK-- SHE SAYS EVERYTHING'S FINE, BUT PARENTS FROM ALL OVER ARE CALLING THE SCHOOL TO CHECK ON THEIR KIDS.

I ASK IF WE KNEW ANYONE ON THE FLIGHT.



I CALL WORK TO SEE IF THE UNIVERSITY'S BEEN CLOSED. KARIN SAYS THAT THE ADMISSIONS OFFICE IS STILL RUNNING LIKE NORMAL.

THEN, LIKE AN UNGODLY DOMINO, THE SECOND TOWER OF THE WORLD TRADE CENTER COLLAPSED--



10:28 AM,  
SEPTEMBER 11TH, 2001.



WE WATCHED IT...LIVE. FIENDISHLY IRONIC, REALLY, SINCE THE DESTRUCTION HAD EVERYTHING TO DO WITH THE LOSS OF LIFE.

I HAVE BEEN TO NEW YORK FOUR TIMES IN MY LIFE. DID BROADWAY, ELLIS ISLAND, THE STATUE OF LIBERTY... NEVER DID THE TWIN TOWERS.

KARIN CALLS TO SAY THAT THE UNIVERSITY IS SHUTTING DOWN IN AN HOUR.

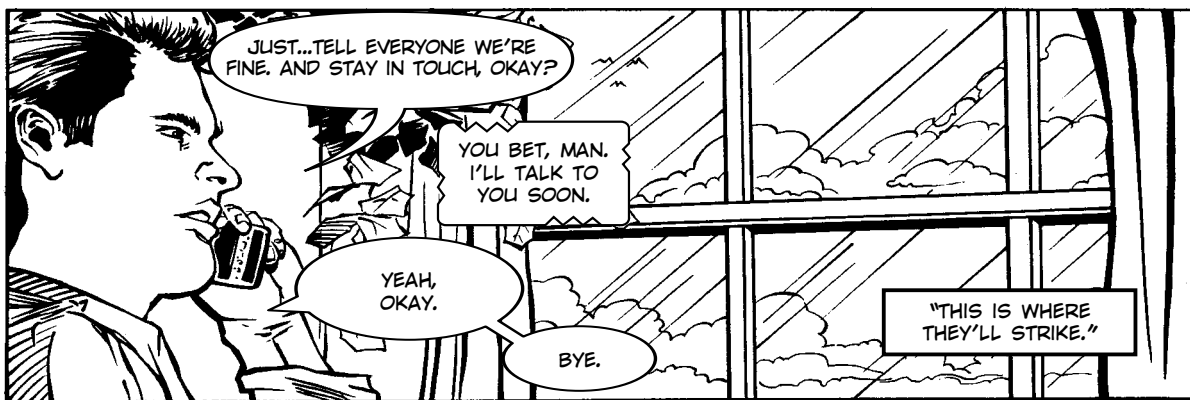
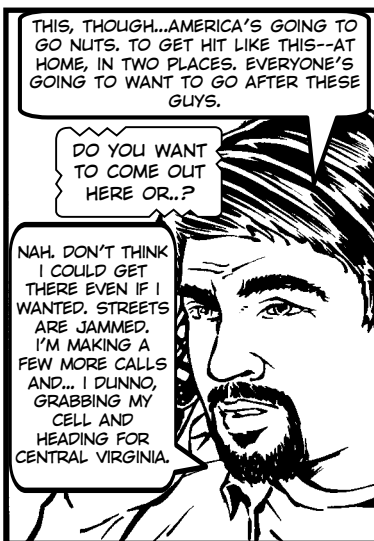
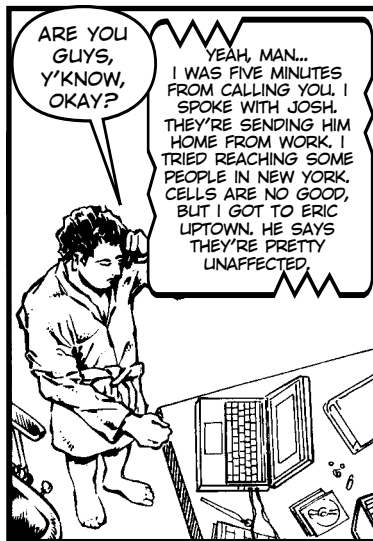
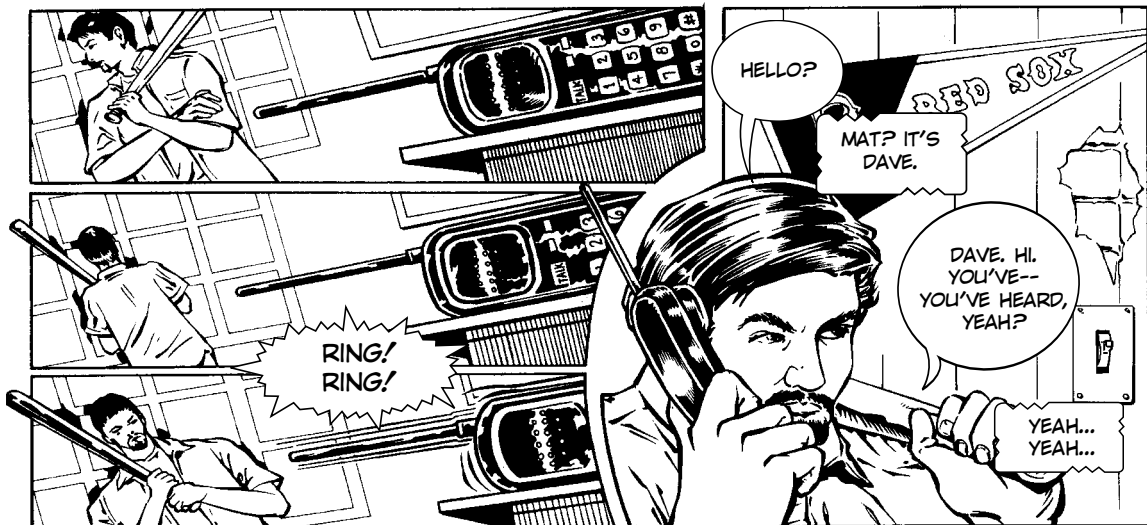


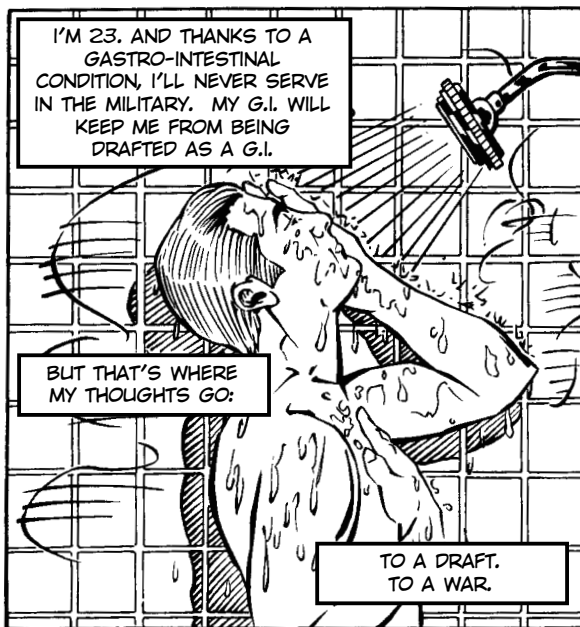
THINGS CONTINUE TO GET CRAZY. THE NETWORKS LOSE CONNECTION AFTER CONNECTION TO THEIR ON-THE-SCENE REPORTERS. BUSH IS DIVERTED AWAY FROM D.C., SENT TO LOUISIANA. MUSEUMS, MONUMENTS, AND SCHOOLS ARE ALL CLOSED THROUGHOUT THE DISTRICT.

IT'S CHAOS. EVEN THE "LAW OF THREES" IS BROKEN--



A FOURTH HIJACKED PLANE CRASHLANDS IN SOMERSET COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA.

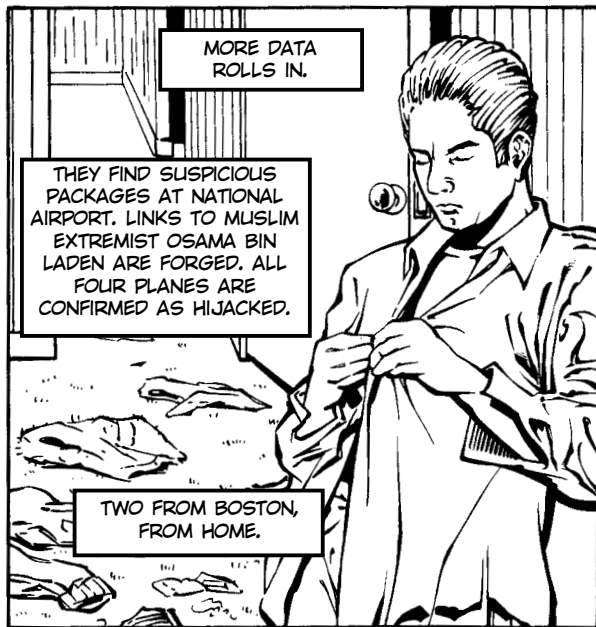




I'M 23. AND THANKS TO A GASTRO-INTESTINAL CONDITION, I'LL NEVER SERVE IN THE MILITARY. MY G.I. WILL KEEP ME FROM BEING DRAFTED AS A G.I.

BUT THAT'S WHERE MY THOUGHTS GO:

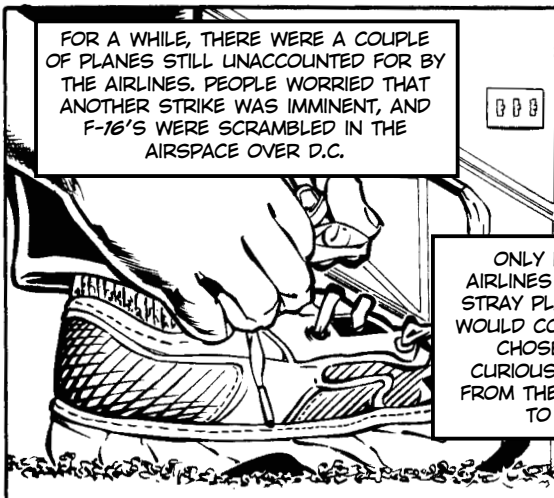
TO A DRAFT.  
TO A WAR.



MORE DATA  
ROLLS IN.

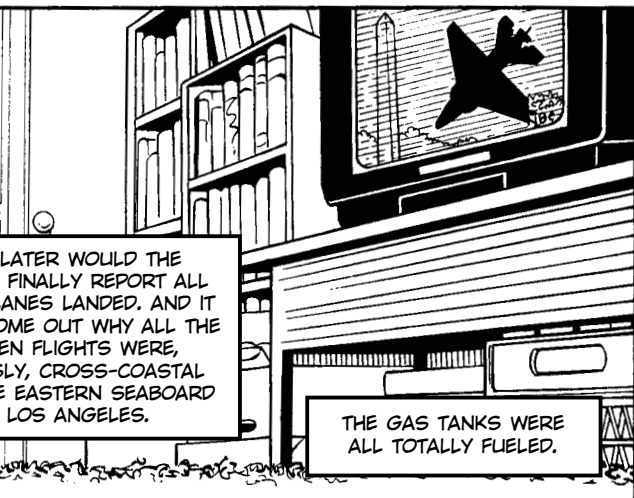
THEY FIND SUSPICIOUS  
PACKAGES AT NATIONAL  
AIRPORT. LINKS TO MUSLIM  
EXTREMIST OSAMA BIN  
LADEN ARE FORGED. ALL  
FOUR PLANES ARE  
CONFIRMED AS HIJACKED.

TWO FROM BOSTON,  
FROM HOME.

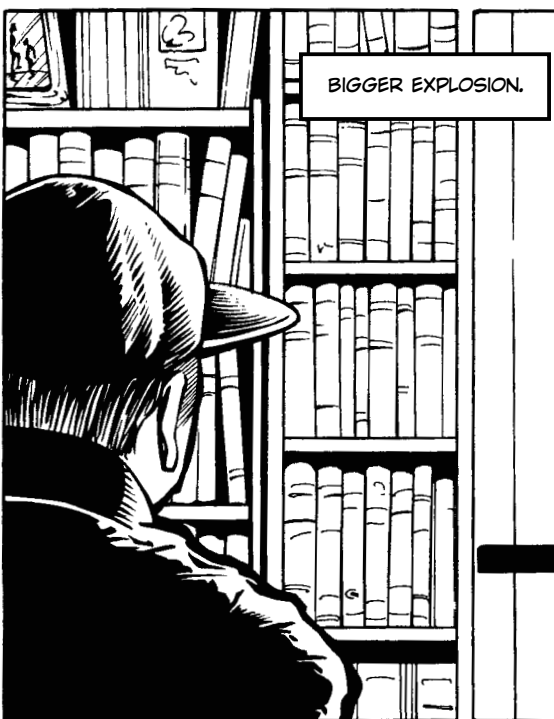


FOR A WHILE, THERE WERE A COUPLE  
OF PLANES STILL UNACCOUNTED FOR BY  
THE AIRLINES. PEOPLE WORRIED THAT  
ANOTHER STRIKE WAS IMMINENT, AND  
F-16'S WERE SCRAMBLED IN THE  
AIRSPACE OVER D.C.

ONLY LATER WOULD THE  
AIRLINES FINALLY REPORT ALL  
STRAY PLANES LANDED. AND IT  
WOULD COME OUT WHY ALL THE  
CHOSEN FLIGHTS WERE,  
CURIOUSLY, CROSS-COASTAL  
FROM THE EASTERN SEABOARD  
TO LOS ANGELES.



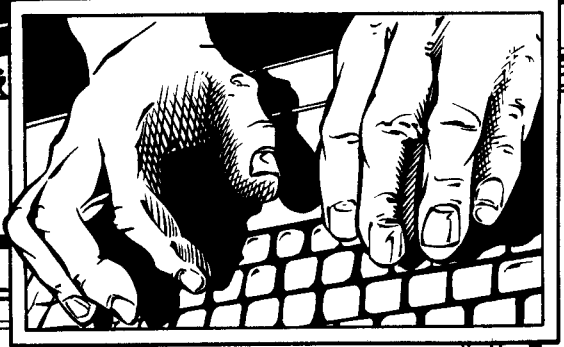
THE GAS TANKS WERE  
ALL TOTALLY FUELED.



BIGGER EXPLOSION.



THEY KNEW--  
THE BASTARDS KNEW.



Subject From DC

Date: Tue, 11 Sep 2001 11:56:18

From: "A. David Lewis" <adl6@georgetown.edu>

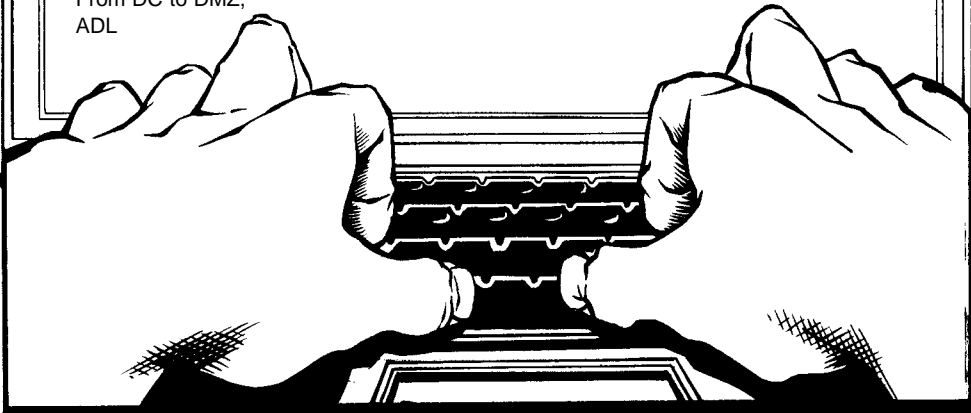
Folks,

I just wanted to write a very quick e-mail to tell you all that I am fine. I'm sure you have all been watching the news -- it's shocking. For certain, it's war...just as soon as we figure out who the enemy is. DC has gone a little crazy, with almost everything shut down, from Metro to airlines to schools, etc. The roads are packed and the phones are erratic. So, the best way may be to contact me by e-mail if you need to. Rima and I are sticking together, either at her house or at mine -- thank god we moved out of Arlington, right near the Pentagon. I hope all your friends and family in the crisis areas are all fine -- I'm told that most sections of NYC are relatively unaffected, so don't panic.

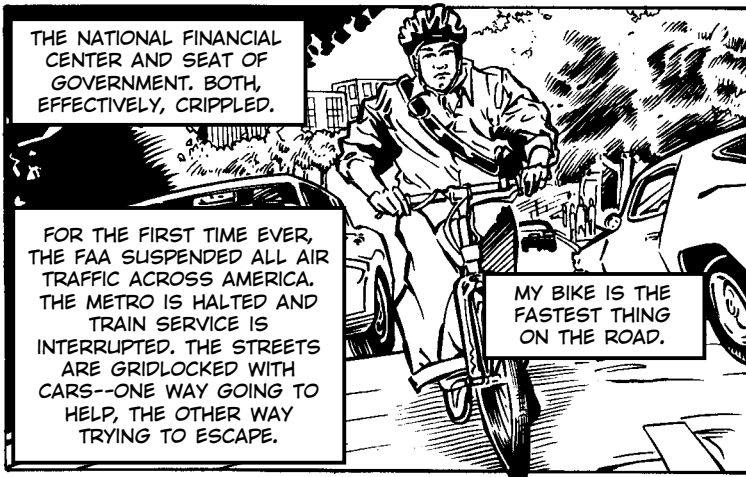
Dad, I hope you get this, stuck as you may be in Alabama.

Everybody, please know that I love you and I'm keeping safe. Check in when you each have the opportunity, ok?

From DC to DMZ,  
ADL







THE NATIONAL FINANCIAL CENTER AND SEAT OF GOVERNMENT. BOTH, EFFECTIVELY, CRIPPLED.

FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER, THE FAA SUSPENDED ALL AIR TRAFFIC ACROSS AMERICA. THE METRO IS HALTED AND TRAIN SERVICE IS INTERRUPTED. THE STREETS ARE GRIDLOCKED WITH CARS--ONE WAY GOING TO HELP, THE OTHER WAY TRYING TO ESCAPE.

MY BIKE IS THE FASTEST THING ON THE ROAD.



ALL THE BANKS HAVE BEEN CLOSED. MOST STORES, TOO. SO I WONDER IF THIS IS MY LAST CHANCE TO GET MONEY FOR A WHILE.



I GOT SOMETHING ELSE ENTIRELY-- PERHAPS A BIT MORE VALUABLE.

AN' I WAS A SECRETARY THERE FOR, WHOO, WHAT? TEN YEARS?

UH HUH.

BUT, YEAH, I JUS' WANTED TO COME QUICK CASH A CHECK, BUT UH-UH. NO CAN DO.



DO YOU MEAN THE ATMS AREN'T WORKING?

NO, THEY'RE FINE, BUT I NEEDED TO GO INSIDE, GET IT CASHED TODAY.

OH... GOTCHA.

WE DON'T SAY ANYTHING MORE, BUT WE LOOK AT EACH OTHER...WITH KINDNESS IN OUR EYES. SHE JUST GIVES A LITTLE SMILE AND A NOD. THEN LEAVES.



I SUPPOSE IF THIS HAD BEEN ANY OTHER DAY, I MIGHT HAVE FOUND TALKING WITH STRANGERS AWKWARD. OR ACTUALLY BEEN BOTHERED AND ANNOYED BY HER CHATTER. BUT NOT TODAY. IN FACT, TODAY I WELCOME IT, AND EVEN TAKE PART IN IT.

HEY.

HEY THERE.

HOW'RE YOU DOING?

OH, YOU KNOW... THROWN. YOU?

YEAH. PRETTY SURREAL. EVERYBODY OKAY?

THINK SO.



YOURS?

I THINK THEY'RE OKAY.

GOOD. GOOD.

YEAH...STAY SAFE OKAY?

YOU TOO.

AND THAT WAS MY CONVERSATION WITH A WOMAN I NEVER KNEW. TALKING ABOUT THIS UNNAMED ORDEAL LIKE OLD COMRADES.

EVERYBODY NOT IN THEIR CAR IS OUT ON THE STREET. ALL DISMISSED FROM WORK OR SCHOOL, SLOWLY WALKING THEIR WAYS HOME. MAYBE THEY'RE DOING THE SAME IN NEW YORK, TRUDGING HOME THROUGH THE AVENUES.

EXCEPT THEIR STREETS ARE COVERED IN AT LEAST TWO INCHES OF SURREAL, DEBRIS-SNOW.

...ACTUALLY, IT'S PROBABLY NOT THE SAME...

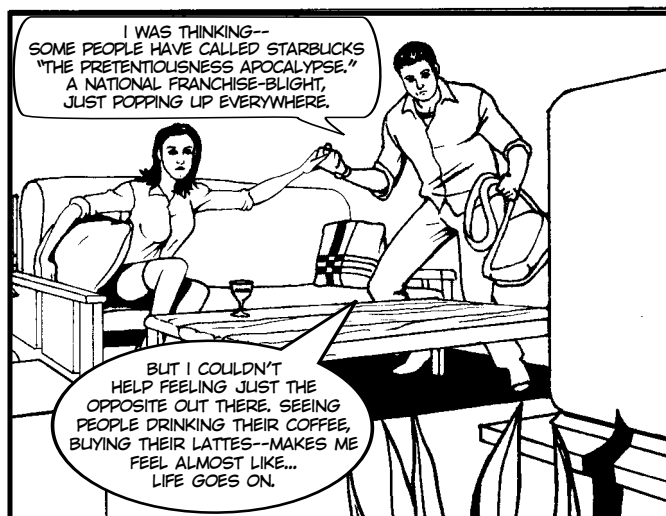
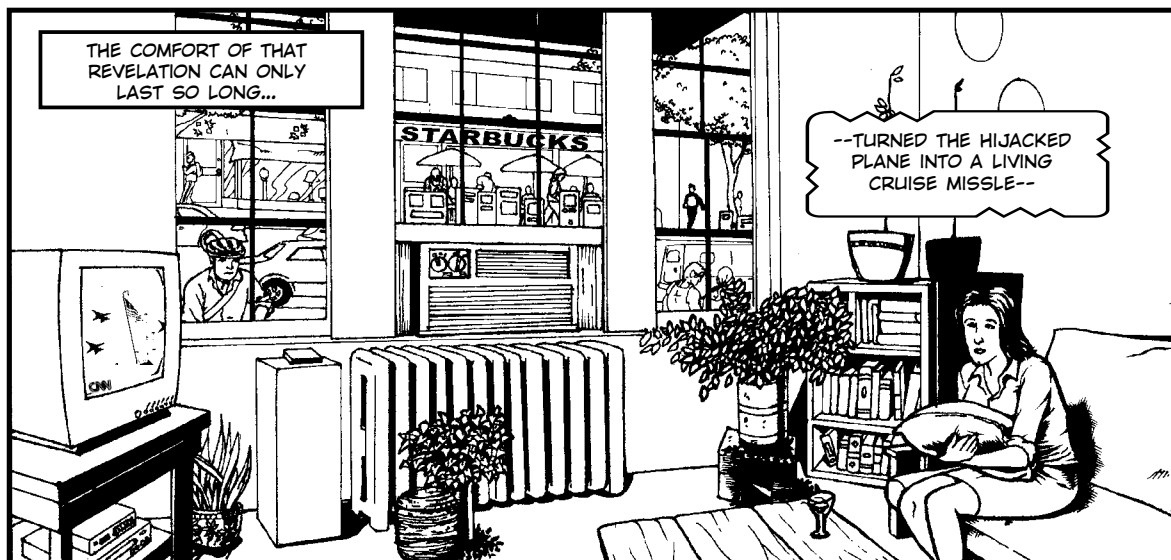
I DON'T UNDERSTAND HOW THIS CAN HAPPEN. THE PENTAGON ATTACKED. THE WORLD TRADE CENTER DESTROYED. THE WORLD SO QUICKLY CHANGED. I'M A CHILD OF PEACETIME, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF DESERT STORM-- A REMOTE SKIRMISH, IN A TELEVISED LAND-- I'VE NEVER KNOWN WAR.

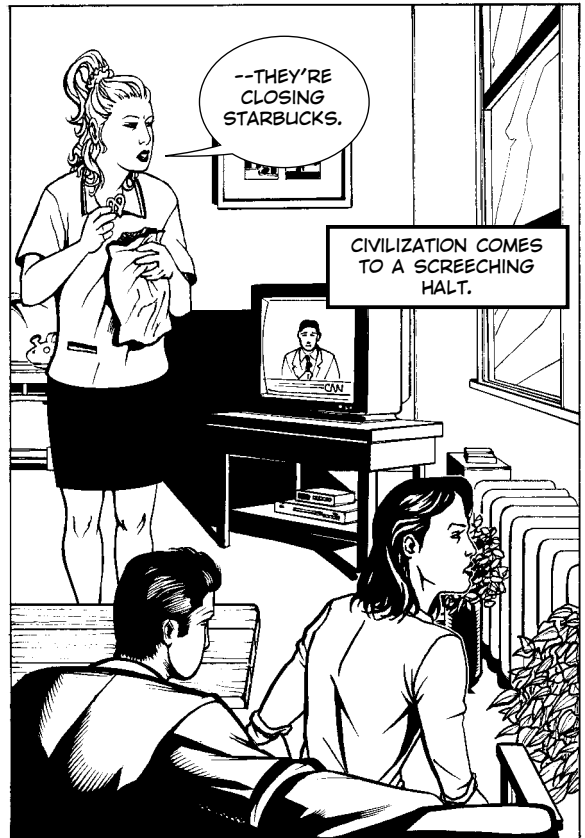
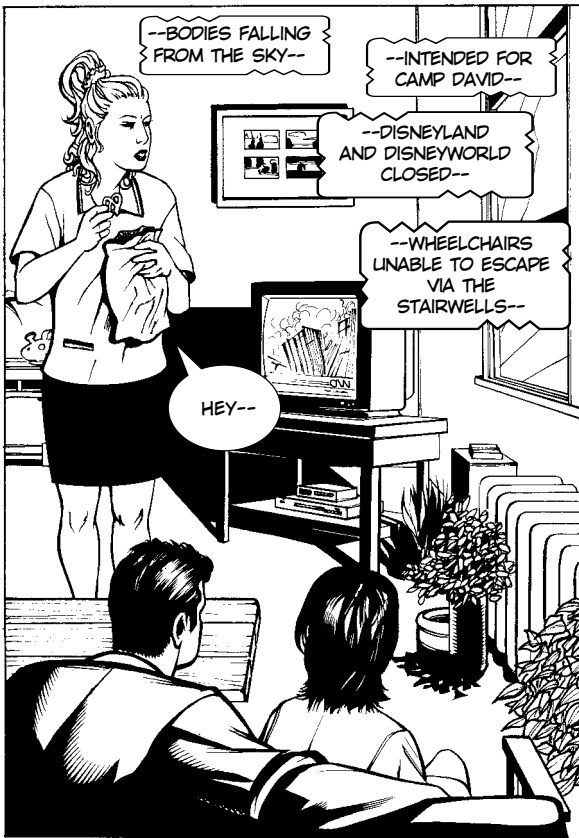
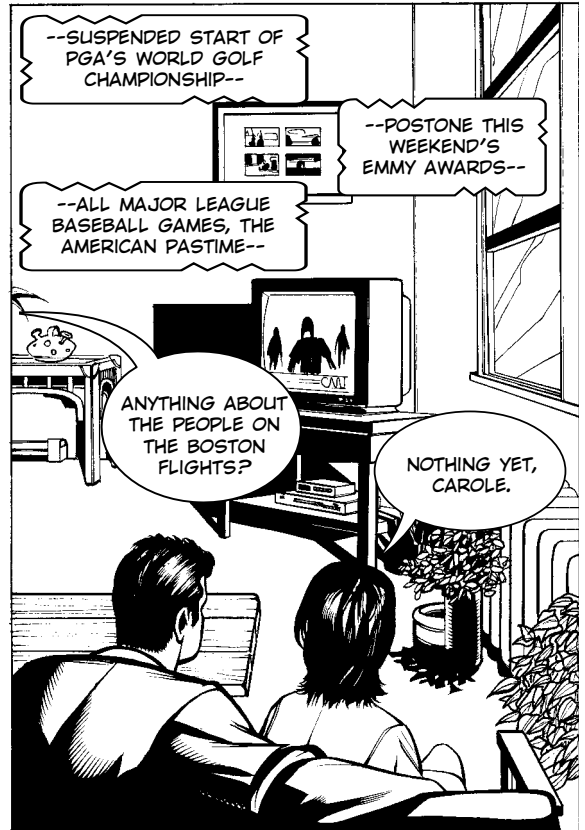
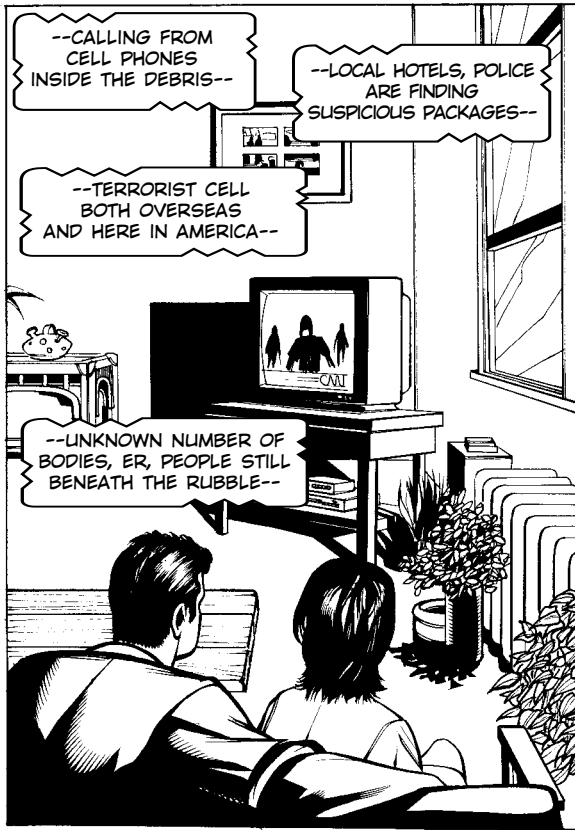
MAYBE THAT'S WHY I'M SO SURPRISED BY MY FELLOW CITIZENS. WHETHER THEY'RE AMERICANS OR ALLIES, THEY DON'T SULK OR PLOD. THEY WALK WITH ENERGY. THEY TALK WITH COMPASSION. SOME EVEN SMILE JUST TO BE ALIVE.

IN NEW YORK CITY, A CHILD DRAGS A STRUGGLING MAN INTO A CHURCH AND WASHES HIS EYES WITH HOLY WATER. ON THE CAPITAL STEPS, REPUBLICANS AND DEMOCRATS JOIN TOGETHER IN UNISON TO SING "GOD BLESS AMERICA."

ACROSS THE WORLD, FORMER ENEMIES COME OUT IN SUPPORT OF AMERICA TO CONDEMN THE "COWARDLY ATTACK" AND THIS "DARKEST HOUR OF TERRORIST ATROCITY."

SOMETHING HORRIBLE HAS UNITED US.





THE FOLLOWING HOURS ARE A BLUR OF FRIGHTENING PICTURES AND HAZY INFORMATION.

MORE EVIDENCE HAS ARISEN FROM BOSTON, TYING THE HIJACKERS TO MIDDLE EAST ORIGINS-- WHICH HAS RIMA QUIETLY FREAKED. HATE MAIL IS ALREADY FLOODING MANY HAPLESS MUSLIM GROUPS.

BUILDING #7 OF THE WORLD TRADE CENTER ALSO FELL. AFTER THE TOWERS, IT WAS ALMOST AN AFTERTHOUGHT.

INITIAL NUMBERS HAVE STARTED TO COME IN. OVER 100 DEAD AT THE PENTAGON. AND OVER SIX PERCENT OF ALL PUBLIC SERVANTS IN NEW YORK CITY HAVE BEEN LOST. PRESIDENT BUSH ESTIMATES CASUALTIES IN THE THOUSANDS.

BUT, THERE'S HOPE -- RIMA FOUND ALL HER FRIENDS. THERE HAVE BEEN NO FURTHER STRIKES. MULTI-FAITH PRAYER VIGILS ARE ASSEMBLED ON CAMPUS. THE WORDS "SAY A PRAYER" ARE WRITTEN IN HUGE, CHALK LETTERS ON THE COURTYARD BRICKS.



YEAH, SOME HOPE... BUT NOT NEARLY ENOUGH.

ALMOST SIMULTANEOUSLY, NEIL, DANNY, AND I WRITE TO EACH OTHER, TALKING ABOUT DISASTER RELIEF. WE AGREE TO CONTACT SOME FRIENDS--EXPLORE WHAT COMICS CAN DO TO HELP.

RING!

I EXHAUST MY ADDRESS BOOK. AND MY MIND--THE BEST THING I CAN THINK TO DO NOW IS SLEEP.

CAN'T IMAGINE THE KIND OF DREAMS I'LL HAVE...

HELLO?

AHH, GOD... I'M SO GLAD IT'S YOU, DAD...

BUT WHO KNOWS? IT COULD BE A NEW WORLD AGAIN TOMORROW.

GOD WILLING.

"Thine alabaster cities gleam,  
Undimmed by human tears."  
-America the Beautiful